



MASON NECK STATE PARK
7301 High Point Road
Lorton, VA 22079-4010

Mason Neck State Park

MASTER PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2010 UPDATE



Department of Conservation & Recreation
CONSERVING VIRGINIA'S NATURAL & RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

June 15, 2010

MASON NECK STATE PARK

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*Reviewed by the Board of Conservation and Recreation on June 15, 2010
and adopted by DCR Director David A. Johnson on June 16, 2010.*

In 1965, the Mason Neck Conservation Committee was formed after two bald eagle nests were spotted at Mason Neck. The committee, concerned about impending development on the peninsula, recommended part of the area to be used as a site for a state park. In August 1967 the Commonwealth of Virginia, with the assistance of matching federal grants, began purchasing land parcels from the Nature Conservancy. Mason Neck State Park opened to the public on April 21, 1985.

Mason Neck State Park consists of 1825 acres and is located in the southwest corner of Fairfax County, approximately 20 miles south of Washington, D.C. The park is situated on a peninsula and fronts on three picturesque embayments of the Potomac River.

A master plan for Mason Neck State Park was developed shortly after the land acquisition was completed in 1974. Construction of the park roughly followed the master plan, but at a lower density. Several elements of the original plan were never developed. The 2004 master plan described the role the park plays in the state park system as well as its relationship to the Mason Neck community, the region, and the state. This 2010 updated report describes the desired future condition of the park at full build-out; i.e., completed development of the two phases of this master plan. Proposed developments are presented in phases and in priority order. Every five years, this master plan is revisited to ensure that conditions have not changed and that recommendations are still appropriate. The next scheduled master plan review will be in 2015.

Mason Neck State Park was acquired for two primary reasons. The first was to conserve and interpret the unique natural features, including biological resources, fisheries, and wildlife. It was equally important to provide a range of recreational opportunities to park visitors, including access to hiking trails, guided canoe trips, and picnicking. A variety of interpretive programs are provided by seasonal interpretive staff as well as off-site environmental educational programs. Additionally, self-guided interpretive trails are available.

Mason Neck State Park attracts several migrating species of birds, including tundra swans and assorted species of ducks; bald eagles also inhabit the area. The park boasts several hundred acres of hardwood forest consisting of oaks, hickories, holly, and other species. In addition, several wetland areas are within the park's boundaries.

The park also has cultural significance with 2 sites on the state and national register of historic places and approximately 30 other identified archaeological sites. The Taft archaeological site was listed in 2004 on the national register. The site is a prehistoric and possibly proto-historic Native American camp dating between ca. 2000 B.C. and 1560 A.D. The Lexington site was listed to the state register in June 2009 and is pending listing to the national register. The

Lexington Plantation was built in 1775 and survived until it burned in 1879. It was originally the home of George Mason V built for him by his father George Mason IV of Gunston Hall.

Recreational opportunities presently offered visitors include fishing, a car-top boat launch facility, boat and bicycle rentals, 7 trails including a 3 mile multi-use trail, picnicking, a group camp, a visitor center, environmental education center and interpretive programs. Attendance at the park during the past ten years is shown in the following chart:

| 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 80,945 | 88,865 | 87,165 | 59,918 | 67,801 | 79,124 | 86,340 | 73,288 | 94,938 | 88,996 |

This master plan update was conducted by planners from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) in accordance with §10.1-200.1 of the *Code of Virginia*. The Code states that a map indicating, at a minimum, boundaries, in-holdings, adjacent property holdings and other features such as slopes, water resources, soil conditions and types, natural resources, cultural and historic resources be prepared. In preparation for development of the Mason Neck Master Plan, meetings were held with the DCR staff and a park advisory committee. The advisory committee was comprised of representatives from local government, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, the park “Friends” group, and other community and user groups. A park purpose statement and goals and objectives were developed and presented at a public meeting for additional input and to solicit comment on the direction the park should take over the next 20 years. A second public meeting was held to present and solicit input on proposed developments.

The purpose of Mason Neck State Park is to conserve and interpret the natural and cultural resources and the rich history of the land, while providing low impact recreational opportunities and environmental education experiences, within the framework of the cooperatively managed Mason Neck Peninsula. The emphasis is placed on education, interpretation, and passive recreation, so few developed facilities are proposed.

The following new facilities are proposed for the park. The design of the buildings will utilize “green,” energy-efficient, and sustainable materials and processes as much as feasible. All development activities will comply with best management practices (BMPs) and utilize the most environmentally efficient stormwater management and erosion and sediment control methodologies to protect water quality. The projects are presented in priority order. Currently, no funding has been designated for any project in either Phase I or Phase II. Funding opportunities will be sought through future capital outlay requests, General Obligation Bonds and available grant opportunities.

The projected cost to bring Mason Neck State Park to its desired future condition is \$10,907,518 in 2010 dollars. The projects identified in the master plan that will bring the park to the desired future condition are arranged in the following list by phase and in priority order.

Phase I.

Enhance Picnic Area, Construct One Large Shelter
Connect to County Water System
Protect and Interpret Lexington Historic Site
Develop a Multi-purpose Environmental Education Center at the Jammes Complex
Improve Environmental Education Center Access Road
Improve and Expand Park Trail System

The estimated cost to complete Phase I is: \$6,428,635

Phase II.

Picnic Area Parking Lot Expansion and Resurfacing
Enhance Picnic Area - Construct Picnic Shelter in Picnic Area
Improve and Expand Park Trail System including Sandy Pt. Boardwalk
Contact Station Expansion and Renovation
Residence Three Bathroom Addition
Shoreline Erosion Control

The estimated cost to complete Phase II is \$4,479,883

Parcels of private land along the boundary of the park may be offered for acquisition in the future. Many of these properties are large lot 'farmettes' and may be suitable for park purposes. Each should be evaluated for its potential to enhance park offerings or protect significant resources.

Staffing and Operations

Presently, the park is staffed with six positions, including a park manager, assistant park manager, chief ranger, park rangers (2), and program support technician. Because of the existing interpretive and educational components of the park, chief ranger–interpreter and park ranger–interpreter positions were identified as a need for the site. These have not yet been established due to state budget constraints. As the proposed phased development is completed, an additional park ranger position will be needed to assist in maintaining the new facilities and trails.

The park's FY2010 budget is \$573,000 including salaries. At full build out and fully staffed to properly manage and operate the park, the budget will need to be approximately \$800,000, an overall increase of about 28%. (See Attachment 1)

MASON NECK OPERATING AND STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

| EXISTING (FY 10) | BUDGET SHORTFALL* | PHASE 1 | PHASE 2 | FULL BUILD OUT |
|--|------------------------------|----------------|----------------|--|
| PARK STAFFING | VACANT | NEW | | PARK STAFFING |
| Park Manager | | | | Park Manager |
| Asst. Park Mgr. | | | | Asst. Park Mgr. |
| Chief Ranger | | | | Chief Ranger |
| | Chief Ranger – Interp. | | | Chief Ranger – Interp. |
| Park Ranger (2) | | Park Ranger | | Park Ranger (3) |
| | Park Ranger – Interp. | | | Park Ranger – Interp. |
| Program Support Tech. | | | | Program Support Tech. |
| | | | | |
| SALARY TOTAL | | | | SALARY TOTAL |
| \$322,000 | \$90,000 | \$40,000 | | \$452,000 |
| | | | | |
| WAGE TOTAL | REDUCTION | | | WAGE TOTAL |
| \$95,000 | \$20,000 | \$18,000 | \$5,000 | \$138,000 |
| | | | | |
| OTPS TOTAL | | | | OTPS TOTAL |
| \$156,000 | \$43,000 | \$9,000 | \$3,000 | \$211,000 |
| | | | | |
| TOTAL BUDGET (FY10 dollars) | | | | TOTAL BUDGET (FY10 dollars) |
| \$573,000 | \$153,000 | \$67,000 | \$8,000 | \$801,000 |

NOTE – All costs (salary, wage, OTPS (Other than Personnel Services)) are based on FY10 budget projections.

*Budget shortfall represents positions and operating costs either frozen or reduced due to state wide budget reductions.

LEGEND

-  PROPOSED FACILITIES
-  EXISTING FACILITIES
-  PARK PROPERTY
-  BOND PROJECTS
- PARK BOUNDARY
-  WATER
-  TREE LINE
-  EXISTING ROAD
-  EXISTING BUILDINGS
-  HIKING TRAILS
-  100' RPA SETBACK



MASTER PLAN FOR MASON NECK STATE PARK

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF
CONSERVATION AND RECREATION
DIVISION OF
PLANNING AND RECREATION RESOURCES
PREPARED BY DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

JUNE 2010



CONTOUR INTERVAL: 10 FEET

